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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

U. S. Department of Agriculture

A radio talk by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered through Station WRC and 35 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, May 27, 1930.

In the Garden Calendar two weeks ago, I called attention to the importance of getting the best seeds available for planting our vegetable gardens. Our annual bill for garden seeds in this country is pretty large. Take the item of seed potatoes alone, for example. We used to call them Irish potatoes, when, as a matter of fact, they're not Irish at all, but are native of South America, so lately we've quit giving our friends of the Emerald Isle any credit except that they showed us how to eat potatoes cooked with their jackets on. Our commercial acreage of potatoes in 1929 was approximately 3,370,000, and if we planted an average of 12 bushels of seed to the acre it would take about 40,000,000 bushels of potatoes for our seed supply alone. About 12,600,000 bushels of these or over 30 per cent are certified seed this year. By the use of certified seed the acre yields are materially increased.

Peas constitute the largest single item in our annual seed account, I mean among the true seeds. According to published statistics, we grew about 320,000 acres of peas for the canneries in 1929. It requires 3-1/2 to 4-1/2 bushels of seed peas with which to plant an acre of cannery peas or about one million bushels besides all the seed peas planted in truck gardens and home gardens. Just about one acre in four or 25 per cent of the peas grown in this country must be saved for seed purposes in order to keep up our seed supply. This problem is becoming difficult and new locations are constantly being sought for growing the seed. At present large quantities of our seed peas are grown in Wisconsin, Montana, Idaho, California, and other of the Northern and Western States.

Beans constitute another big item in our seed bill. About 2,000,000 acres of beans were planted in the United States in 1929. An average of about 1-1/4 bushels of seed is required per acre, or a total of approximately 2,500,000 bushels for seed purposes alone. We depend very largely upon California, Colorado, Idaho, Michigan, and New York, for our supply of seed beans, however, considerable quantities of our seed beans are grown in other States.

Formerly, practically all of our celery seed was grown in Europe, but today we produce the finest celery seed right here in this country. We have always grown our own supply of tomato seed, but recently the canners and manufacturers of tomatoes and tomato products have gone to a lot of pains to secure the very best seed available which in turn is distributed to their contract growers.

When it comes to record prices for garden seeds, cauliflower, celery, and fancy tomato seed are among the highest priced, but on the other hand, it only takes an ounce of tomato seed, if properly handled, to produce enough plants with which to set an acre. There are about 70,000 celery seeds in an ounce, and an ounce will produce enough plants with which to set an acre. Three dollars an ounce is about the maximum price for any of

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these seeds, but what does that amount to when it comes to getting the best strain of seed?

When you or I go to the seed store or send in an order for seeds with which to plant our garden, we have no way of knowing the variety or the quality of the plants they will produce. Perhaps they may be like some I planted this year and would not grow at all. We leave it to the seedsman to supply us with dependable seeds, and if he doesn't then we blame him and he is not always to blame either.

Just a slight difference in strain, for example, may mean a lot of difference in the market value of the crop. The American Seed Trade had its real beginning about 1806, but 100 years after its foundation, it took on a new and greater growth so that the seed business is now one of the big industries of this country.

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Review of Farmers' Bulletin No. 1436,
"Why Potatoes Run Out."

Who remembers when farmers used to talk about this and that variety of potatoes running out? Here is a little bulletin by Dr. E. S. Schultz of the Bureau of Plant Industry which tells why potatoes run out. It is Farmers' Bulletin No. 1436. As a result of Dr. Schultz's investigations, backed up by the investigations of other workers, it has been found that potatoes run out because they are weakened by diseases, and that where diseases are either prevented or controlled, potatoes do not run out. On the first page of the bulletin it says that mosaic, leaf-roll, spindle-tuber, and related diseases are mainly responsible for the so called degeneration or running out of potatoes. The bulletin tells how aphids or plant lice spread these maladies from diseased to healthy plants. It is Farmers' Bulletin 1436 and the subject is "Why Potatoes Run Out."

